

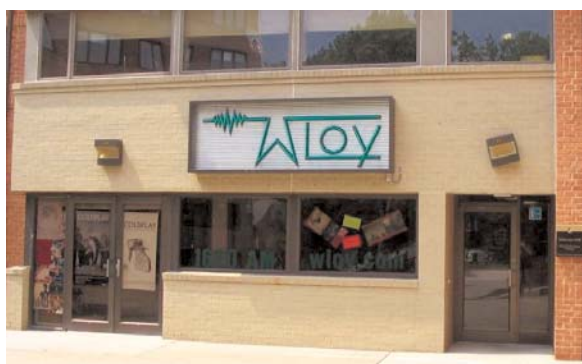
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"Our House is Still a Very, Very Fine House"

by John Deveck

[BALTIMORE, Maryland - September 2003] WLOY is a new station at Loyola College in Maryland, for the joint purpose of student classroom (mostly Communications Majors) and student club (you know: those slackers who get involved in that whole radio "thing"). The facility includes four main studios (On Air, Production, Recording A and B), three News desks, a Library and Engineering rooms.

This was a big project; in the last column we offered a tour of the main On Air studio and discussed the equipment and design decisions that led to its layout. This time, we will look at the rest of the house.



I'LL TAKE YOU THERE

Recording A and B were set up with identical small equipment racks and several microphone options. The intent was to make them functional for simple recording booths, interview rooms and full production suites for classes. Each rack is on wheels so we can run it into the hallway outside the room for larger performances and interviews. These studios can also be called up throughout the facility in case we need a quick substitute on air studio.

The Raxxess racks include an LPB Blue 5c on a tray (giving us broadcasting functions like muting and remote starting), Denon DN-T620 CD/Cassette Combo units conserve space, Aphex 207s handle microphone preamp duties (again saving space with dual preamps in a 1RU chassis), while Hafler P1000 and LPB Spatial Ones handle listening duty. Microphones are a mix of Studio Projects B1 for basic operation and C1 and C3 for in-studio recordings.

Both Recording studios run iMac 17" units with ProTools LE software. A Digidesign MBox interface is in Recording A and their Digi002 console is in B. We have already managed some in-studio stuff that sounded pretty good. Besides my own fumbling, I have tried to make sure the students are involved in setting the microphones, tweaking levels and processing.

We went with Pro Tools for a lot of reasons, but they can be summed up by the experience of one of the students interviewing for a job. Q: "You know Pro Tools?" A: "Yes" Q: "When can you start?" It provides a great base for Audio, Video, Radio, Live Sound and other areas that students are interested in exploring. And, it has been great at helping Journalism students understand how to assemble the parts of a news story.

Production got a bit more extravagant, and will continue to expand. This is where students will be introduced to audio processing and multi-track recording, so it has a few more bells and whistles. Middle Atlantic supplied the basic two wing desk with monitor overbridges.

An LPB MX18 sits in the center connected to DAs, digital and analog patch bays, and a Digidesign Digi001 running ProTools LE on an outdated G3 Mac (on our "upgrade list"). Denon DN-720R Cassette and

DN-C630 CD units and a Technics SL1200 MKII make up the standard analog input devices.

We also have some of that digital stuff (and our CD players swing both ways...). A Denon DP-DJ151 Digital turntable allows us to bring in the jazz collections of several faculty members (and my blues 78s) and clean them up for airplay.

A Denon dual tray CD Recorder, Sony MD Play/Recorder, Samsung DVD player, and the Digi001 all route through an MAudio DigiPatch. This lets us run full digital I/O with ProTools for bringing in outside material and passing it back cleanly. A great little box and very reasonably priced – if you have a bunch of S/PDIF or TOSLINK devices, I would highly recommend taking a look at them.

PRESSURE DROP

Then there is the audio processing: The Aphex Compellor, Dominator, Parametric EQ and Aural Exciter, join Roland's Voice Boss and PreSonus ACP22 in the rack. At the patch bay (a real plug-n-play unit), connections to the other studios appear, as well as extra I/O for the ProTools system. Audio distribution is a mix of Broadcast Devices UTA-200 and Kramer VM-1120 units.

Rolls handles headphone distribution (as in all studios) and we have a mix of Studio Projects B1, C1 and Groove Tubes microphones, on LPB Silent Booms. The plan is to expand the variety of microphones available to increase the flexibility of the space and (more importantly) use them for classroom discussions of microphone technology and technique.

Recording B is identical to A, but instead of an MBox, it uses a second desk with a new Digidesign Digi002 console for multi-track recording on a rolling table so it can be pulled into the hallway if we need the space for recording. It was great to see this all work when we had Jennie Stearns in the station (she is great!) with her husband for a pre-concert chat and strum.



The students set up four microphones and played with each channel live on the Digi002 to make the recording, while also feeding the live mix back into production where two other students ran the interview. They were thrilled with the result.

The News area was designed to be both a classroom space, and a news production area. Each desk runs Cool Edit Studio (4-track), JK Audio Innkeepers, Rane mixers and B1 microphones on Silent Booms. Each of the three can independently make and record phone interviews for later playback, with the first position able to go directly on air. Our student news staff has used these for a variety of quick phone interviews with local promoters and for research background. The end results have been great for both classes and on air programming.

The Library (Music Director's office) and the Engineering room have racks similar to the Recording rooms. This allows for listening, ripping and playback of music from almost any location in the station. As with all the other studio areas, these also route through Engineering so as to provide emergency backups.

MAYOR OF SIMPLETON

Then there is the Engineering room. It was not supposed to be my office, but it ended up that way. Good thing I considered functionality in the design, eh? Now, where is that window when I need it?

All of the studios route through here. We have pulled the Audition and Program buses from every console back and into six Broadcast Devices UTA-200 DA racks, and right back out to every other studio. So, in theory, we can bring up anything anywhere, all the time

A patch bay allows us to monitor everything and a Dorrough 1200B Test Set helps check levels – until the students start fiddling. Kramer VM-3A tiny DAs help with odd routings and splitting for our external monitors (ceilings in lobby, vestibule, building entry) and transmission systems (CATV, AM, Internet). An important note: Never let a student set levels – no matter how good they are – without supervision. Just say "NO." Trust me.

Why all the DAs and not a Router? Well, besides the "all your eggs in one basket" fear, routers are darned pricey. With this setup, I have an easy visual reference for every studio (the plug-in cards for the UTA-200 all have level LEDs dancing for my amusement) and the ability to adjust every left/right level for every line. And, I have every studio routed to a punch block in every other studio all the time. Plus if I have a failure, which I did, it is usually going to be obvious (it was) and easy to swap out a card (it was) and be running again immediately.



Why the Broadcast Devices DAs over something less expensive? Two reasons, I can call Bob and yell at him if I have a problem (and more importantly, he will fix it), and the design of the cards allows way more flexibility than other DAs I have used. Over the years at LPB I used those cards for all kinds of things – standard DA, Headphone DA, Microphone Preamps, Headset interfaces, you name it. Bob was willing and able to make the cards do almost anything, and I liked that.

For areas that will not really need any tweaking, I used Kramer DAs. If you do not know about them, find some. I stumbled on them at NAB 2002 and have been very happy with them. They do audio and video stuff, are very sturdy and reasonably priced.

SAVE IT FOR LATER

Have I sufficiently described our studios at this point? I am happy to keep babbling, but I would rather just invite you to contact me if you want to stop over, or hear and see more. Next issue we will start talking about the transmission systems and computers. I should have five or six transmitters in place by then.

John Deveck is the Operations Manager of WLOY at Loyola College in Maryland, and former Sales Manager of LPB Communications. He has spent a silly amount of time working with odd situations and low budgets to make educational radio stations happen. He is still searching for people that get his humor. He is available at wloy@loyola.edu or 410-617-5349.